I. Wilson E-5 (1936-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngoni FN17
Nyakyusa

believed to remain in a woman and, if she has neglected the taboos, this blood 'cuts' the child later conceived (cf. Document, p. 219). This connection is insisted upon, though witchcraft inherited from the father is spoken of as being carried directly in his blood, which is thought to be transferred to his wife during intercourse.

Furthermore, a pregnant woman is believed to have some of the attributes of a witch. She, like a witch, causes grain and pulse to diminish if she passes near by when it is spread out to dry, or grain women who are stamping or grinding grain. If she speaks or comes too close 'the child inside catches hold of the food, and it disappears'. And if she should speak inadvertently, forgetting that she is pregnant, she must throw a stone or a piece of stick into the grain, or take a little of the flour in her hand, otherwise the women will say: 'She is proud, that girl, she is a witch, why is she talking?' and it is thought that she will have a miscarriage. A pregnant woman, like a witch, and one who has been using medicine, is spoken of as 'heavy' (*mito*) in contrast with one who is 'empty' (*lwasi*), having nothing in the belly, and Mwakasolo explained that, 'When they speak of a pregnant woman being "heavy", they think that perhaps the foetus is witchcraft.' The foetus and the python of witchcraft are felt to be somewhat alike; but in most situations they are clearly distinguished, and indeed it is held that a woman may have both. If the afterbirth is delayed it is said that the woman is herself a witch, and her python is closing up the vaginal passage, so that the afterbirth cannot come away. A pregnant woman is not spoken of as a witch unless she harms someone by neglecting the taboos connected with her state, and her husband, who must keep the same taboos, may also be called a witch if he breaks them.

Sickness and death among men and cattle, and a diminution in the milk yield of cows, are held to be common results of witchcraft, and any 'unnatural' event, such as a case of bestiality, or of sodomy between a grown man and a boy (not between two youths), or of intercourse between a young man and an old woman, or of unusual behaviour among animals or birds, is taken as evidence that witches are at work. It is the 'unnatural' element that is emphasized (cf. Document, p. 225). An owl hooting on one's roof, and someone staring at one, are also taken as indications of witchcraft.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

121 811 object or action which it is felt to resemble. The images men use, the things they feel to be alike, are determined in a general way by the form of the society, and Nyakyusa images are in terms of bananas, staple grains, cattle, smithing on a primitive forge, lineage organization and so on. There are cultural idioms, accepted forms of expression, which frequently recur, but the particular associations are not predictable any more than the associations made by a poet in our own society—the priest and the doctor are indeed in one aspect poets.

771 813 843 The essence of Nyakyusa ritual is that things which are felt to be alike are taken as causally connected. Both positive actions and avoidances or taboos are based on the assumption that like objects or actions react on one another. This was clearly recognized by an informant who remarked: 'avoidances come from resemblances.' The basis is invariably the *feeling* of likeness, but mixed up with this there is often exact observation, as in the following taboo. The husband of a pregnant woman may not hunt big game because, it is said, they will be unusually fierce and attack him particularly. The association made is between a pregnant woman who is irritable, 'fierce' (*nkali*), and the game which is fierce. The husband is identified with his wife, 'and', the Nyakyusa say, 'lion *always* attack a cow in calf'. Sometimes like things are felt to be antagonistic, as 'seed in the belly' and seed in the ground, and sometimes sympathetic. Sometimes like is thought to produce like—a pregnant woman is forbidden to sit close to someone lest she bears twins—and sometimes men mime a misfortune as a prophylactic against it.

789 184 771 The rituals are magical in the sense that efficacy is held to lie in the particular material form,[1] but they vary in detail with the cultural group, just as the language does.[2] The rituals of the Lakeshore plain in Tanganyika (MuNgonde) and of Selya are almost identical, but those of the Kukwe, the Lugulu, the Saku, the Ndali, the Penja, and the people of Ngonde in Nyasaland are all somewhat different. Differences in ritual are directly connected by the people themselves with differences in lineage, and the principle is maintained that every individual follows the ritual of his or her father's lineage, though a married woman will follow that of her

[1] For a discussion of this characteristic of magic cf. G. & M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change* (1945), pp. 72–3; 88–95.

[2] An account of the various cultural groups included under Nyakyusa, and of related peoples, is given in *Good Company*. pp. 1–5.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

585 881 child at her husband's.' Neglect to kill the bull may result in sterility. Mwaseba, a middle-aged man, said:

If the officiants, the mothers of the girl, have not eaten, and the father also, the girl will not bear a child, these people are angry and the shades are angry, they (the shades) help them (the living). And if you do not perform the other customs of the litter the shades are angry, the fathers and the mothers. They say: 'What! Have you not treated the child?'

Mwakionde, the doctor, explained:

[843] When a woman conceives and has a miscarriage, it is *mindu*, the shades are angry. Perhaps if we have not killed the bull of puberty we buy one. The shades are angry, saying: 'Why have we not received a libation of blood poured on the ground for our grandchild? They have done wrong towards us, we who created them.' The girl does not bear a child because pouring out the blood of a beast (bull or cow) is to pray (*ukona ililopa lya nombe ko kwiputa*).

Mwakobela, our neighbour, said:

If we have not eaten the bull of puberty, they bewitch us (*bikundoga*), the child does not bear a child. Our fellows in the lineage bewitch us, they say: 'We have not eaten the puberty meat.' Then, later on, the husband brings the bull and we eat, and the *ija mmapa* meat we throw in the banana grove, and we pray and pray and the girl conceives.

842 775 The fertility of the girl is believed to depend upon driving away the shade of her father's lineage from her body. We have already quoted (p. 98) the prayer: 'Here is the meat! I have eaten the food of others, *come out a little*, may she bear a child at her husband's.' Mwaisilage explained this conception:

Those of old said: 'We drive away Kyala and the shades, may she bear at her husband's.' She moves to others, to a different lineage. May that lineage rise up from the dead (*kisyukege ikikolo kila*). If we do not treat the girl she will not bear a child at her husband's.

To understand this it is necessary to understand the Nyakyusa theory of conception. It is held that sexual desire in both men and women comes from Kyala and the shades, and without their support a man is impotent, a woman barren. Kasitile was quite explicit on the matter:

Kyala is in the belly. He causes the blood of a woman which forms a child to flow and the blood of the man also. We say that Kyala is in the belly; he watches over us at the conception of a child. But our fathers,

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Mu Ngonde

841 QUESTION: And menses?
775 MWANDISI: When the shades are angry a woman is constantly menstruating and does not bear a child; if they are not angry she conceives.

833 And on another occasion he said:
842
775 Lust comes from the shades; if they are angry with you you are impotent; you cannot beget a child.

His wife added: 'My husband says in his heart: "Let me go to my wife." It is the shade that makes him.'

One informant after another mentioned *both* Kyala (or Lwembe) *and* the shades as being present in intercourse. Mwakionde, after [843] talking of miscarriages being due to the anger of the shades, went on:

Kyala has created the bowel of desire. If a man is impotent we say Kyala has not given him breath to beget a child.

KAKUJU: If my child runs off with a man, whether a stranger or her husband, before she has reached puberty and I continue angry, if Kyala has helped me she does not bear a child. Then it is said 'her father was angry'. They come to me bringing the remaining marriage-cattle and I pray and she bears a child.

QUESTION: If the husband asked for her properly and deflowered her before puberty?

KAKUJU: There is no case, it was all right, even long ago. I said: 'Finish paying the cattle.' Perhaps he begged me, saying: 'I am poor, Father,' and I was satisfied.

842 No pagan questions the power of the shades over fertility, and
775 this power is believed to be exercised by the mother's lineage, as well as that of the father. Angombwike, the Christian, said:

[881] The pagans fear that if they do not perform the puberty ritual when a girl reaches puberty, she will dry up. The blood will not come again even though she is not pregnant. Then, if her periods do not come for two or three months, like this, she will never bear a child. They say the shades are angry and have bound her fertility. And if she does not reach puberty at all, if menstruation does not begin, her father prays in the banana grove, saying: 'You, fathers, what are you angry about?' And if the girl's mother's brother is angry on account of cattle—perhaps her father has not given marriage-cattle properly for her mother—he, the mother's brother, binds a wisp of the litter (*ulufumbo*) from her puberty ritual in the loft, then the girl will not bear a child. Inquiry is made of a diviner who says: 'The mother's brother has bound her.' The father takes a cow to him and says: 'I am sorry, I have done wrong, I

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

195 *Ukukinda* means to pass, to surpass, and *ukukilanya* (overstepping), in its metaphorical use, implies that 'one has power and the other is weak, so the powerful one does some injury to the weak one'.

834 842 [753] Fourthly, as was made apparent in the puberty ritual, it is held to be dangerous to 'mix bloods'. Adultery is not only an infringement of the exclusive rights of a husband, but it may injure him directly, causing him to have diarrhœa, which is a 'getting rid of the filth' due to contact with a strange 'blood'. It was implied that intercourse with a menstruating woman was in some sense 'mixing bloods' also, and the danger to parents of contact with a newly-married daughter before a precautionary ritual has been performed, stems from the same thing; the parents, through their daughter, are brought into contact with the blood of another lineage, that of the new son-in-law.

●843 Besides being 'heavy' and therefore liable to 'overstep' others, a pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of any grain she approaches, for the foetus within her is voracious and snatches it. Therefore neither she nor her husband (who participates in her condition) may approach other people's millet[1] or beans or oil-seeds spread out to dry, or speak to those who are reaping or grinding or stamping or brewing, without making a gesture of good-will by spitting on a pebble or knotting a leaf, and throwing it into the heap of grain. The sanction is fear of a miscarriage, for the owners of the food may have used medicines 'so that the food may be much and people be astonished'. Her own crops a pregnant woman may handle freely, and a chief's wife does not observe the taboo in her own village.

Two or three quotations will make these conceptions clearer:

ANGOMBWIKE: When my wife has conceived they say we are both 'heavy', both my wife and I. Then, if oil-seeds or millet are out drying in the sun, they tell us not to speak. 'You are heavy ones,' they say. So we are silent. They say that if there is talking we will catch hold of the oil-seeds or millet, and it will diminish. Yes, I must avoid the grain even though I am alone, because I am heavy.

KASITILE: Maize does not vanish but millet and beans. The child which is being made bewitches them; they disappear. . . . The child has opened its mouth wide, its jaws gape.[2] It is that child which is being

[184]

[1] Some held that millet was the only grain affected; others maintained that maize was also.

[2] *Umwana apambwile ulupambo nkanwa. Ulupambo* is used of the gaping jaws of a crocodile.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

created in the belly which snatches millet and beans. These are the foods that Kyala said are important. 843

MWAIKAMBO: When a woman is pregnant she fears to pass people who are at work planting, smithing, milking, or brewing beer, because they say the child in the belly, the weight (*ubusito*), is like a witch, it will damage food like witchcraft; beer is spoiled and tastes nasty, food does not grow, the smith's iron is not easily worked, the milk is not good. If a pregnant woman comes across her fellows planting she stops them for a few minutes while she passes. If they are brewing they give her a little beer to taste.

ANGOMBWIKE: As for avoiding food, a woman avoids especially when she has been pregnant for one or two months. It is said that if she passes through the gardens, perhaps when people are planting, or when they have already planted but the seed has not yet sprouted, the child in the belly tries to snatch the millet, and it meets the medicine (for people plant millet with a medicine, saying: 'May my millet not rot in the ground'), then perhaps the mother has a miscarriage. If the child in her belly has sprouted then she does not fear much . . . and if the millet has sprouted she does not fear much, but when it has not yet sprouted then the medicine is fierce.

Besides the symbol of the foetus with 'jaws agape' snatching food, there is a symbol of 'seed within' fighting 'seed without'. Mwaikambo was careful to point out that this interpretation was a personal one, assented to, but not volunteered, by others he consulted; however, it was later confirmed by Kasitile.

MWAIKAMBO: A pregnant woman should avoid those planting beans and millet, or straining ointment, sunning millet, or brewing beer, because there is kinship (*ubukamu*) between the child in her belly and food, we call all of them seed (*mbeju*). The seed in her belly and that outside fight; that within is fierce and overcomes that outside. To help them plant is to make friends; to knot a leaf is to bind the anger of the human seed. All those with whom I have discussed the matter agreed that this is so, but they have agreed when I began to explain it to them; none of them understand the other symbols. I discussed it with about eleven men.

KASITILE: The taboo against a pregnant woman passing millet and other seed spread out to dry is because these seeds fight with the child inside. It is seed, it defeats them; it is seed, it is water, it is blood. To bind a leaf is to bind that blood within, that it may not kill the seeds out drying. If someone else's food is being planted and a pregnant woman approaches, and does not bind a leaf and throw it in the grain basket, then the seed is insufficient to plant.

A general principle of Nyakyusa thought is the opposition of 828 772

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

like activities; things which are felt to be alike are often felt to be antagonistic. We have shown that certain of the pregnancy taboos are interpreted in terms of the opposition between seed in plants and seed in the womb, and between pumpkins in the field and pumpkins in the vagina, and we have touched on the opposition between procreation and war. Sexual intercourse, 'the war of the mats', is directly compared with war; the two are felt to be alike and therefore incompatible. Association with a menstruating or parturient woman is felt to be weakening to a warrior; continence of a warrior before battle is enjoined—'men feared to die quickly if they slept with their wives just before war.' Moreover, a menstruating wife never touches her husband's weapons lest they be weakened.

Hunting is classed with war and the same taboos apply. Added to them is the notion that, since a pregnant woman is often angry, the animals her husband hunts will be angry also, and he is in much greater danger than an ordinary hunter.

ANGOMBWIKE: If you go into the bush and you have left your wife heavy, at home, if you meet a lion it will not run off, but will injure you, maul you. And if you are many, a leopard or a lion will attack you, the heavy one, not the others.

QUESTION: Why?

ANGOMBWIKE: It is as if there was much anger. And we've noticed something else, if a lion attacks cattle it always attacks a cow in calf. And another thing. If a woman is heavy she is very bad-tempered (*nkali*), it's like a passion. Perhaps the woman is bad-tempered or perhaps good, and you, the husband, are bad-tempered. Pregnancy shows in many ways. . . .

A pregnant woman has a great fire in her body, she sweats a lot and is passionate (*nelyojo*), she is fierce (*nkali*). That fire is strong; we all flee from the woman, we all dislike her. And when pregnancy begins the animals in the bush wish to kill you, the husband. That fierceness [the fire] makes them hate you; you are like a twin. A first-born child is very fierce (*nkali*), so a woman is very passionate and sweats a great deal.

His wife's pregnancy puts a man in danger from wild animals, and so does a quarrel with her, quite apart from the pregnancy which tends to produce such quarrels. Mwaisumo said: 'If I go hunting after quarrelling with my wife it is very dangerous, I might be killed by a wild animal.'

Besides the idea that animals will *attack* the husband of a preg-

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

nant woman there is a notion that they will *flee* from him, and therefore he will be hopelessly unsuccessful in hunting. Isaiah, who persisted in hunting while his wife was pregnant and rarely brought in anything, was the laughing-stock of his neighbours. Lyandileko, the woman doctor, explained: 'The animals flee because the man smells. He smells because his wife is pregnant.'

Procreation and smithing are also felt to be in opposition because they are felt to be alike. A pregnant woman usually avoids a forge altogether, lest she miscarry, and her husband, if he approaches one, remains silent until he has picked up a piece of charcoal, spat on it, and thrown it into the fire. If he neglects to do so, the iron does not coalesce. Kasitile explained the taboo very clearly:

> If a woman is pregnant she and her husband both fear to go near a forge lest either the iron or the foetus is spoiled. The foetus is spoiled only because medicines are used on the forge; that is to say, the medicine of the forge spoils the iron in the belly of a woman, and she has a miscarriage. But if there is no medicine then the iron is spoiled; it is difficult to work until the smith has sought a doctor to treat it with medicine; then the iron is all right again.

Kasitile speaks of 'the iron in the belly of the woman' and the details of this symbolism are instructive. Angombwike said:

> When a smith forges a spear he does not sleep with his wives[1] because, we say, when a woman conceives the fire blazes within her to forge a person, and the woman's fire and the smith's fire fight. When a smith comes with the fire of his smithy on his body and lies with a woman, the woman has a miscarriage.
>
> The iron of a woman is that within which receives the seed [i.e. the womb]. And we ordinary people who are not smiths, we fear the smith's fire. We do not fear to injure a woman, no, but we fear *ilipondelo*, the disease of the forge, in children. If a man sits talking with a smith at his forge and catches hold of the iron being forged there, if his wife at home bears a child, the child will cough: 'He, he.' It's like the cough of *ingotolo*, but we call it 'the forge'. Then people say: 'The forge! Indeed, you, the father, must have sat with a smith at the forge.' Then the father thinks, and he remembers, and takes the child to that smith with whom he sat, and the smith lets his bellows play on the child's body

[1] All informants were agreed that a forge is dangerous to a pregnant woman or her husband, but a smith consulted denied that he observed any sex taboos himself. 'The fire is mine.' 'But,' he said, 'if my wife is pregnant or has given birth to twins, when I go to someone else's forge I myself, with the wisdom of a smith, spit on a piece of charcoal and throw it in the fire.'

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and that cures him. So, when a man comes to a smith's forge for the first time, he always takes a piece of charcoal from the fire and spits on it and throws it into the fire. This means: 'I have come to your forge, smith, may this fire not come on my body.'

And sometimes the smith's iron does not glow and sparkle well. Then he is angry, saying: 'Heavy ones are present. Some of you have pregnant wives, you are spoiling my fire.' We all pick up pieces of charcoal and spit on them and throw them into the fire again. Then the fire blazes up well and the iron glows and sparks.

Mwambuputa, the village headman, confirmed this:

When my wife is pregnant I fear the smithy. I spit on a piece of charcoal. Until she gives birth I fear, but when we just play together on the mat, and she has not yet conceived, I do not fear. . . . Only when it is seen that the 'iron' is there do I fear.

QUESTION: The iron?

MWAMBUPUTA: It's the blood of the man. The man is the smith. He forges iron there with the woman. The woman is the bellows. The smithing flourishes because of the sweat. Sometimes a woman conceives if I have lain with her two or three times—if Kyala gives us a child—but some delay, and I sleep with them a whole month.

QUESTION: The woman is a bellows?

MWAMBUPUTA: Yes, because when she is having intercourse she gasps: 'He, he, he!'

QUESTION: And the man?

MWAMBUPUTA: Yes, but where do we find the fire? In the body of the woman! It's a great fire. Hence we say the bellows is the woman. It's smithing. Women are the anvil. Is there not fire in their bodies? Therefore I hammer there.

The primary taboo is on the pregnant woman approaching the smithy lest she injure it, but it is also thought that, like grain and cattle, it may be treated with strong medicines which will cause her to miscarry if she breaks the taboo. Hence the Nyakyusa dictum: 'She who has a miscarriage is she who is proud (*namatingo*).'

The conception that like things are antagonistic, and that the sexual activities of different couples must not be mixed, is clearly shown in the taboos relating to fire and the calabash cup used for water. An elderly councillor of Ngonde, himself a Christian, explained it:

It is taboo for married people to blow up the fire in someone else's house, or to drink from the calabash cup; if they do they will bring a

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

coughing disease to the owners of the house. . . . Pagans used to fear to let those who are sleeping together touch the hearth-bricks or blow up the fire in their house for if they do so, then the owners of the house, both man and woman, fall sick coughing. They say it is the disease of fires (*myoto*). . . . But when a woman has borne a child and is suckling it, and her husband is not with her, then it is not taboo.

Making fire by friction and, in more general terms, fire, are symbols of sexual intercourse, and 'the fire of the body and the fire of the house fight'. Drinking from a calabash cup is perhaps also a symbol of intercourse—the shape of the cup suggests it—but there is no direct evidence of such an association.

The taboo on mixing the sex activities of different couples is pushed to the point that women avoid for a day the milk of a cow that has been with the bull. 'They say: "We will harm the cow. It will abort." They compare it with themselves as women.'

Two last pregnancy taboos may be noted which turn, not on the feeling that like things are antagonistic, but that like produces like. Things felt to be alike are treated as causally related. We quote Mwambuputa, the village headman:

> Women fear to stand in a doorway when they are pregnant. They say: 'How should the child stand in the doorway? It will refuse to come out.' Because if birth is delayed, it is as if the child refused to come out of the house. That is the symbol. And I, the husband, feared also [to stand in a doorway]. Now we men do not fear; it is finished; but women still fear.
>
> And another thing, when a woman was pregnant we feared to sit close together, I, the husband, and my child. It was taboo. And for my wife and another woman to sit close together was taboo. It was said that she would bear twins, because we had sat together. Now we men do not fear, but women still do.

(*b*) *The confinement*

A first confinement, like first menstruation, is the occasion for elaborate ritual, and though at later confinements (as at later menstrual periods) certain taboos must be observed, they are less numerous and less strictly enforced than those connected with the birth of the first child, *umwana gwa busungu*.

A first child should be born at the husband's mother's house, 'and if the first child is a girl they will tell her to come again for the second, saying: "Come that we may treat our husband [i.e. grandson]." ' The woman lies, during labour, on a heap of leaves

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Lugulu

Even after her return a wife may delay before cooking or drawing water again for her husband. Mwaisumo said:

> Some men do not let their wives cook for them until the child's body has gone black and it laughs. . . . This is mainly due to the mockery of friends, for some people refuse to come and eat with a man if the food is cooked by a woman who has recently borne a child, even though she has come out of confinement. They laugh at him and say: 'Why do you eat food prepared by a newly delivered woman? Have you no sense of disgust?' And her friends laugh at the woman, too, saying: 'Look you, the child has not yet grown at all!'
>
> MWAMBUPUTA: Formerly a woman with a new-born child did not cook food. We said she was filthy. What food that she had overstepped would anyone eat? Until two months had passed she avoided cooking, then she cooked.[1] And she hid the child. Men should not see it for two months. It was taboo.

This is the full ritual performed for a first-born child and, some say, for the first-born of each sex. For others there is no sending a fowl to the girl's parents, or bringing her back with gifts, and it does not matter where the child is born; but still the seclusion of mother and infant, treatment with *ikipiki* medicine brought by the husband's mother, and shaving are felt to be important.

We did not find any significant differences between the rituals of birth in Selya and in Kukwe, but there is one rite peculiar to the Lugulu people and regarded by other Nyakyusa with somewhat shocked amusement, which is interesting because it expresses, in crude terms, a conflict between the groom and the bride's family repeatedly suggested in the ritual of Selya and Kukwe, but never openly acknowledged. We did not see this rite ourselves, but quote the account of Kakune, the doctor, whose mother was Lugulu. Though himself a Kukwe, he speaks in the first person as if he were Lugulu—a dramatic device common enough in Nyakyusa.

> KAKUNE: When my daughter goes to her husband, and first becomes pregnant, they tell us: 'She is pregnant.' And we say: 'Oh, she is pregnant? She is pregnant! War has come!' When she has borne her child, the go-between in the marriage representing the husband comes to her parents with a hen to tell them. Then later they send the go-between a message, saying: 'Come'. Meanwhile they have prepared huge quantities of food: porridge, and curds, and beer. And then the girl's husband calls his friends of the age-village (he does not call his relatives, but his

[1] A monogamist eats with his friends in the age-village, or is provided for by his mother, like a bachelor.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

861 romping glee; and the musical jingle of the tiny bells that most of them wear on their ankles up till three or so is pleasant to the European, and rings with a thrilling response in the heart of the adoring mother, who sits on the ground watching the gambols of her little one.

• 843 The unborn child is treated with great care, and surrounded with superstitions. The mother must submit to restrictions in regard to diet, and indications of the sex of the coming child are given by the preferences she shows for permitted foods. She must not eat hot food, for that would burn the child's head; nor beans, for they might cause the disease called *ilyulu*. An expectant mother who drinks much milk will bear a son; if she has a great desire for flesh foods, a daughter is known to be coming. A scolding woman need not be surprised if her child is a boy, especially if her husband is the victim of her language. Some women will not eat rice, perhaps because it is a new food, all the possibilities of which have not yet been fully explored.

844 The worst possible place for a woman to have her child born is at her own father's house, unless it is with the consent of her husband; for every one will assume that the child has an unknown father. If an [754] expectant mother suspects her husband of sorcery she will take care to have her child born at a distance, so that it may not inherit its father's undesirable powers, these being transmissible only at close quarters, and only after birth. With heathen women, the birth, if in the daytime, takes place mostly in the open

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

576 the road, and all spears must be lowered from the "ready" position, as must axes or other weapons. It is *mwiko* to attend to one's personal comfort in a public place.

843 784 The prohibitions connected with women are very numerous, and only a selection is given. A pregnant woman may not go near food in any condition, growing, being threshed, or being cooked; nor may she go near beer that is being prepared. If she goes out of the house, she must not turn back in the doorway; the ancestors are there; she must go right out, and if she needs to go in again, she must do it from a pace or so from the door. The penalty is the death of the child she is carrying. An interesting prohibition is that against going behind anyone, and it applies specially though not exclusively to women. The incised medicine of the person behind whom she passes loses its virtue; but the evil may be averted by the person turning round to face her. A woman must not sweep rubbish out of the house; she must lift it out; to sweep it out is to scatter her husband's wealth.

595 The younger wife must not begin sowing or planting until the elder has begun; she must not sleep at night nearer the fire than the elder; she must carry loads for the elder wife, and be generally in a subordinate position. There is no reluctance on the part of the first wife to see her husband taking others; the more he has the greater is her position. A singular prohibition is that which forbids a man to take his widowed mother home to care for her; he must care

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

were connected. And if the expected judgement does not fall when a son has wronged his father it is said: 'The father loves the child so much that he only complains half-heartedly.'

It is admitted (when the point is pressed) that misfortunes *may* fall on good men as well as evil, and then they are interpreted as a discipline, a testing, from God, but this is 'a hard saying', scarcely to be believed. The *inequalities* in the fortunes of men demand explanations and Christians, as well as pagans, find it very difficult to believe that they are 'natural'. They always suspect some human intervention; they believe that men manipulate mystical power to buy fortune for themselves. The reality of pythons in the belly may be doubted by the better educated, but belief in 'medicines' has scarcely diminished, and new medicines are constantly coming in from outside, among them costly patent medicines guaranteed to cure any and every disease, or to make the user popular and successful. Some sort of distinction between medicines which it is permissible for a Christian to use and those, like love-potions and defence against witchcraft, which are not permissible, is attempted, but the line is an arbitrary one. And often there is a conflict in the individual's own mind: as one elderly woman of a chief's family (who would normally have taken the first-fruits medicines) put it: 'It's taboo to use these medicines; even if we do fall ill we say: "No, I will not take it, I look towards God (pointing upwards)." '

Most Christians have pagan kinsfolk who are quick to interpret misfortunes in pagan terms, and the sort of conflict of ideas that arises is illustrated in the case of a young woman who died in childbirth. She and her father were Moravians; her husband had joined the Pentecostal Church which rejects all Nyakyusa medicines. Her first child was still-born, the second died shortly after its birth, and her father insisted that she should have been taking a medicine which it was customary for women in his lineage (he was a Penja) to drink during pregnancy; the girl herself wished to be treated, for she did not accept the teaching of the Pentecostal Church on this point, but her husband refused. During her third pregnancy she was ill and finally, with her husband's consent, she was carried to a Nyakyusa doctor of her father's choosing; nevertheless she died. Her father and her husband had been on bad terms, the father demanding, rather arbitrarily, the balance of the marriage cattle; and there was a great deal of gossip, some neighbours hinting that her own father had killed